

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 9 August 2021

Greetings.

This is my 'Monday Musings' email.

First, here is the information for which some of you have been waiting, the solution to last week's (far-from-easy) riddle: A supper (of the Lord).

The riddle, together with the relevant Bible references, runs:

If you are at **the first** (the 'great supper' of the kingdom of God and salvation, Luke 14. 16-17), you should be at **the second** ('the Lord's supper', 1 Cor. 11. 20-26), you will be at **the third** ('the marriage supper of the Lamb', Rev. 19. 6-9), and you won't be at **the fourth** ('the great supper of God', Rev. 19. 17-18).

If you aren't at **the first** (the 'great supper' of the kingdom of God and salvation, Luke 14. 18-24), you could be at the second ('the Lord's supper', 1 Cor. 11. 20-26), you won't be at the third ('the marriage supper of the Lamb', Rev. 19. 6-9), and you could be at **the fourth** ('the great supper of God', Rev. 19. 17-18 – which *could* take place not very long after seven years from now, at our Lord's second advent in glory).

There was a 'hidden' clue in last week's 'Scripture' reading. The reading includes the word 'supper' three times (1 Cor. 11. 20, 21, 25 RV). What is more, the first of the three occasions actually uses the expression, 'the Lord's Supper'.

You will be relieved to know that the 'supper' riddle is the last riddle I shall be inflicting on you. You will, therefore, have no need to wish this week that you could call on the services of godly Daniel of old, who (according to Belshazzar's queen – or the queen mother) had 'understanding to ... explain riddles' (Dan. 5. 12 ESV).

And you will find that (a) the 'Scripture' reading, and (b) the final 'Food for thought' musings below are devoted to the four components of last week's head-scratching riddle.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture. ('Supper' number 1.)

Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!'

Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready".

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused". And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused". Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come".

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind".

And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room". Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'

Luke 14. 15-24 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Eyes lifted up – for good or bad.

(i) Lot: 'And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan' (Gen. 13. 10).

(ii) Abraham: 'And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket' (Gen. 22. 13).

(iii) Isaac: 'And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming' (Gen. 24. 63).

(iv) Jacob: 'And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came' (Gen. 33. 1).

- (v) Joseph: 'And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin' (Gen. 43. 29).
- (vi) Balaam: 'And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel' (Num. 24. 2).
- (vii) Joshua: 'And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand' (Josh. 5. 13).
- (viii) The men of Beth Shemesh: 'And they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it' (1 Sam. 6. 13).
- (ix) The Lord Jesus: 'These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour is come"' (John 17. 1).

'Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust' (1 Pet. 3. 18).

'J. T. Baddeley, in his book, "The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus" [page 439], tells of a brave leader in the Caucasus who, in the middle of the last century, was struggling to maintain the independence of his people. He was Shamil of the tribes of Dagestan. On one occasion, when defeatism was prevalent among his countrymen, Shamil proclaimed that whoever would contend for capitulation with the Russians would be beaten with a hundred heavy lashes. An offender was caught. To Shamil's embarrassment and grief he found it to be his own mother. Following a period of fasting, prayer and meditation, he instructed that the penalty should be executed. After the fifth stroke, however, he stopped the executioner, had his mother withdrawn, and then, baring his own back, insisted on taking the full weight of all the remaining ninety-five strokes. His tribesmen were so impressed by their leader's justice, sincerity and willingness to suffer that no one again mentioned negotiations with the enemy.'

(A. Naismith, '1200 Notes Quotes and Anecdotes', page 189, number 1048.)

But, better by far, we can each sing:

Jesus paid it all,
 All to Him I owe;
 Sin had left a crimson stain,
 He washed it white as snow.
 (Elvina M. Hall)

'No man's land'.

- (i) 'Let no man glory in men' (1 Cor. 3. 21).
- (ii) 'Let no man seek his own' (1 Cor. 10. 24).
- (iii) 'Let no man deceive you with empty words' (Eph. 5. 6).
- (iv) 'Let no man rob you of your reward' (Col. 2. 18).
- (v) 'Let no man despise your youth, but set the believers an example' (1 Tim. 4. 12).
- (vi) 'Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted of God"' (James 1. 13).

Four examples of the Saviour's ability.

- (i) He is able to succour the tempted: 'He is able to succour them that are tempted' (Heb. 2. 18).
- (ii) He is able to sympathise with the weak: 'We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses' (Heb. 4. 15 ESV).
- (iii) He is able to save His people to the uttermost. 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him' (Heb. 7. 25).
- (iv) He is able to subdue all things to Himself. 'He is able even to subdue all things to Himself' (Phil. 3. 21).

New for old.

At the beginning of the 18th century, a French archaeologist and translator, Antoine Galland, added three stories to the Syrian collection known as 'The Arabian Nights' or 'The Thousand and One Nights'. One of those stories was that of 'Aladdin and the Magic Lamp'. At a critical point in the story, we read that 'Aladdin had gone a-hunting for eight days, which gave the (evil) magician plenty of time. He bought a dozen copper lamps, put them into a basket, and went to the palace, crying: "New lamps for old!"'

A well-known story, indeed. But, after all is said and done, 'New lamps for old' was only fiction.

Yet we know of something better by far – and it is not fiction! The apostle Paul wrote, 'we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself' (Phil. 3. 21).

Truly, 'New bodies for old! What a day that will be!

Walking in a worthy manner.

- (i) 'Walk worthy of God' (1 Thess. 2. 12).
- (ii) 'Walk worthy of the Lord' (Col. 1. 10).
- (iii) 'Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called' (Eph. 4. 1).

'Continue in'.

- (i) 'Continue in my word' (John 8. 31).
- (ii) 'Continue in my love' (John 15. 9).

- (iii) 'Continue in the grace of God' (Acts 13. 43).
- (iv) 'Continue in the faith' (Acts 14. 22; Col. 1. 23).
- (v) 'Continue in prayer' (Col. 4. 2).
- (vi) 'Continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control' (1 Tim. 2. 15).
- (vii) 'Continue in the things which you have learned' (2 Tim. 3. 14).

Five things to 'hold fast'.

- (i) 'Hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess. 5. 21).
- (ii) 'Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard' (2 Tim. 1. 13).
- (iii) 'Hold fast our confidence and boasting in our hope firm to the end' (Heb. 3. 6).
- (iv) 'Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He is faithful who promised' (Heb. 10. 23).
- (v) 'Hold fast what you have' (Rev. 2. 25).

'Agree'.

'The Greek word for "agree" in Matt. 18. 19 means to symphonise and suggests a musical harmony, where chords are tuned to the same key, and struck by a master hand.

1. There is a symphonising which we should avoid, that is, a concert for the furtherance of evil, like Ananias and Sapphira, when they "agreed together" to tempt the Holy Spirit—Acts 5. 9.
 2. There is a symphonising which we should recognise, namely, when the working of God's providence agrees with the fulfilment of God's Word (see the word "agree" in Acts 15. 15).
 3. But the symphony which is especially pleasing to the Lord is when His people agree in a concert of prayer, as Judah did—2 Chron. 20. 4, as the disciples did in the upper room—Acts 1. 14, as the Church did for Peter—Acts 12. 5, 12, and as Nehemiah and his workers did—Neh. 4. 9'.
- (F. E. Marsh, 'One Thousand New Bible Readings', page 4, number 6.)

Our threefold armour.

- (i) The armour of *light*: 'let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light' (Rom. 13. 12).
- (ii) The armour of *right*: 'approving ourselves as the servants of God ... by the armour of righteousness' (2 Cor. 6. 4-7).
- (iii) The armour of *might*: 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God' (Eph. 6. 10-11).

Seven 'L' negative commands.

- (i) 'Lean not unto thine own understanding' (Prov. 3. 5).
- (ii) 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth' (Matt. 6. 19).
- (iii) 'Let not your heart be troubled' (John 14. 1).
- (iv) 'Look not at the things which are seen' (2 Cor. 4. 18).
- (v) 'Lie not one to another' (Col. 3. 9).
- (vi) 'Love not the world' (1 John 2. 15).
- (vii) 'Lose not those things which we have wrought' (2 John 8).

('Supper' number 2.)

The Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11. 20-26.

"It is not to eat the Lord's Supper", v. 20 (my emphasis). Why not? Because, as the apostle explains in verse 21, during the preceding so-called "love feast" everyone has been greedily devouring 'his own supper', v. 21. It is out of the question, Paul is saying, that, following their deplorable excesses and selfish conduct at *the one*, the Corinthians could then properly observe and celebrate *the other*. Paul speaks of the remembrance as "the Lord's Supper" because 'the Lord' is both *the author* of it and *the subject* of it. In every way, the Supper belongs to Him. And it belongs to Him as 'Lord'.

... Twice in verses 24-25, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" ... I note that, outside of the records of the institution of the Supper, this word "remembrance" is found only once again in the New Testament. This is at the beginning of Hebrews 10: "In those sacrifices there is a reminder ('a remembrance') of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins", Heb. 10. 3-4. That is, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament served to bring sins to remembrance. But the bread and wine of the Supper serve to bring to remembrance, not sins, but Him who, by His once-for-all sacrifice, has put sins away forever – so that they are remembered no more!

... And, by means of the bread and cup, the apostle says, we proclaim the Lord's death "till He comes", v. 26, when we will have no further need of symbols. For the Supper forges the connecting link between His two comings for us. It is the monument and memorial of the one; it is the pledge and promise of the other. It points *back* to the greatest accomplished event of the past and points *forward* to that which is for us the greatest awaited event of the future. The Supper is, in effect, therefore, a visible sermon which proclaims both (i) the reality of the Lord's death and (ii) the certainty of the Lord's return.

As Mrs Elizabeth Charles' hymn, "No gospel like this feast", so beautifully says:

Here we would rest midway,
As on a sacred height,
That *darkest* and that *brightest* day,
Meeting before our sight'.

(Reproduced, with permission, from pages 117-124 of 'Studies in First Corinthians' (Precious Seed Publications)).

('Supper' number 3 and number 4.)

'The marriage supper of the Lamb' and 'the great supper of God', Revelation 19. 6-9, 17-18.

For context, we need to do no more than go back to the summons, 'Praise our God ...' (Rev. 19. 5). For it is in response to that summons that the heavenly singing rises to a crescendo in the last of four Hallelujah choruses (v. 6; cf. vv. 1, 3, 4).

This fourth chorus resounds with even greater volume than the preceding three – sounding, not only, as in verse 1, 'as the voice of a great multitude' (the same expression) but also, unlike in verse 1, 'as the roar of many waters and as loud peals of thunder'. And this deafening song of praise is distinguished from the earlier songs, not only by its volume but also in that it looks, *not back*, as each of them, *but forward*.

This, the last of the four Hallelujah choruses, directs our gaze to the 'Wife' of no-one less than the Lamb (v. 7; cf. 21. 2, 9), who, as the worthy Executor of God's purpose for the earth and for men, has, from the outset of chapter six, been progressively opening the seven seals of the scroll – Himself the unseen cause and source of the many fearful judgements which have been falling through the intervening chapters.

This, the fourth 'Hallelujah' chorus, points:

(i) *not back* to 'Babylon', a worldly system opposed to God ('the great Prostitute' with no husband, Rev. 17. 1 and 19. 2), *but forward* to a heavenly company, greatly loved and cherished by God;

(ii) *not back* to a worldly system, portrayed as both a woman and a city (Rev. 17. 18; 18. 10-21), *but forward* to a heavenly company, portrayed as both a woman and a city – 'the holy city, new Jerusalem' (Rev. 21. 2, 9-10);

(iii) *not back* to 'the great Prostitute', once 'arrayed' in the most gaudy and flashy manner (Rev. 17. 4-5) and now stripped and naked (Rev. 17. 16), *but forward* to the Bride/Wife of the Lamb 'arrayed' (the same word) in her simple, but radiant, wedding dress (Rev. 19. 8).

Yes, true, both 'the great Prostitute' and the Bride/Wife of the Lamb are said to be 'arrayed' in 'fine linen' (Rev. 18. 16; 19. 8). But there all similarity ends; for the 'fine linen' of the Prostitute is accompanied with purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls (Rev. 18. 16), whereas the 'fine linen' of the Bride/Wife of the Lamb stands alone, unadorned, simply 'clean' and 'white' ('bright', 'glistening'), as is fitting for the chaste Bride of Christ (Rev. 19. 8; 21. 2; cf. 2 Cor. 11. 2).

And I note that this, the first mention of the Lamb's 'Wife', together with the announcement of the forthcoming marriage, comes only *after* the account of the great Prostitute's fall and destruction. I take it that the Holy Spirit insists on the removal of what we might loosely label, 'the false and counterfeit church', before introducing us to the true church – to the real thing!

In one sense, the four Hallelujahs *ring out* the old and *ring in* the new. Earlier, heaven had been summoned to '*rejoice*' at God's judgement on Babylon (Rev. 18. 20) and, now, heaven calls on itself to '*rejoice*' at the coming of 'the marriage of the Lamb' (Rev. 19. 7). 'The marriage of the Lamb' is mentioned explicitly only here in the Bible and expresses, I suggest, the deep love, intimacy and formal union between our Lord Jesus and His church, for whom He once gave Himself (Eph 5. 25-27, 32). Indeed, I imagine the thunders of the fourth Hallelujah chorus '*pealing*' out as heaven's wedding bells just prior to the marriage. So, the Prostitute *dies* and the Bride enters on a new stage of her *life*.

Following the great multitude's announcement of the marriage of the Lamb, the angel (who has been speaking to John since the opening of chapter 17) now pronounces (in the central of seven beatitudes: Rev. 1. 3; 14. 13; 16. 15; 19. 9; 20. 6; 22. 7, 14) a blessing on all who receive invitations to the Lamb's marriage-supper; the 'marriage-supper' being distinct from, and following, the actual marriage (cf. Esther 2. 16-18).

But who, we may well ask, are we to understand by 'those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb'?

As I see it, there are only two possibilities:

(i) That the invited guests represent companies *other* than the church, possibly angels, or, I guess rather more likely, (a) Old Testament believers, such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, (b) the saints of Tribulation days, and (c) including John the Baptist, who once likened his relationship to the Lord Jesus to that of '*the friend of the bridegroom*' (John 3. 29). Needless to say, *if* this is the correct interpretation and even *the guests* at the marriage are counted 'blessed', how much more so must be *the Bride!*

(ii) That God's people are viewed in this passage under two separate symbols; namely, on the one hand, *collectively*, as the Bride/Wife of the Lamb, and, on the other hand, *individually*, as the guests who receive invitations to the marriage-supper. Not that such an interpretation would be the least

strange in a book that depicts the Lord Jesus as both a Lion and a Lamb in the space of two verses (Rev. 5. 5-6) and, in effect, as both a Shepherd and a Lamb in the very same verse (Rev. 7. 17).

I do not pretend to know which of these two interpretations is correct. What I know for sure is that this is the *first* of two very different 'supper invitations' issued in the chapter. The *second* is issued by an angel to the birds flying in mid-heaven, summoning them to 'the great supper of God' (Rev. 19. 17).

Those who partake of the Lamb's 'marriage supper' enjoy one kind of feast; the birds of the air at the 'great supper of God' enjoy a very different kind of feast. As believers, we rightly relish the prospect of being at the first supper, but we certainly have no wish to be at the other – when all those present find *themselves* on the menu! Better by far, we can safely say, to *feast* than to *be feasted on!*

For this latter 'supper' consists of a gruesome feast of human 'flesh' (the word being used six times in all), at which the birds of prey (cf. Matt. 24. 21-30) are to gorge themselves on the corpses of those 'slain by the sword which came out of the mouth' of the mighty Warrior King, our Lord Jesus (Rev. 19. 17-18, 21). At ordinary banquets, men often feed on the flesh of birds, but here the birds are summoned to feed on the flesh of men!

Although it is 'the spirits of demons' which assemble the kings and armies of earth to the great battle (Rev. 16. 14; cf. 19. 19), it is 'an angel standing in the sun' who issues the summons to the birds of heaven to devour their corpses. And I note that the angel issues his invitation to the birds, *not after* the battle, *but before* ever the battle is joined – indeed, seemingly, before the forces who fight under the banner of the Beast have even gathered themselves together in readiness for the conflict. The Holy Spirit wants us to know that the outcome of this 'war' is *never in any doubt* – that the heavenly Warrior-King's victory is a foregone conclusion!

And what a stark contrast there is between (i) the 'great supper of God' (Rev. 19. 17), which pictures God's intervention in devastating judgement, and (ii) the 'great supper' of which the Lord Jesus once spoke, which pictures the gospel feast of the kingdom of God and of salvation made 'ready' for needy sinners (Luke 14. 16-17).

(iii) Go on, smile.

Three short ones this week.

1. 'Johnny, tell me', the English teacher asked, 'what is the opposite of joyful?'

'That would be sorrowful', Johnny answered.

'And what is the opposite of depression, William?'

'That would be elation', responded William.

'And you, Matthew, how about the opposite of woe?'

'I guess', Matthew ventured, '*that would be giddyup*'.

2. 'How much do you charge for a haircut?' Angus asked the barber.

'Ten pounds', replied the barber.

'What price is a shave?'

'That's five pounds'.

'Och aye', Angus said, 'then, *shave ma head*'.

3. 'You have been found guilty', declared the Judge. 'My ruling is five thousand pounds or three months in prison'.

'If it's all the same to you, your Honour', replied the defendant, '*I'll take the money*'.